



Coalition

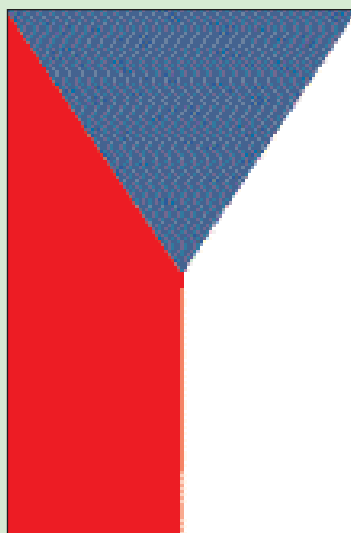
Scimitar

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Basrah children receive toys, supplies from Czechs



Military members from the Czech Republic hand out school equipment and toys to children at a newly opened school in Basrah.



Photo by Corporal Martin Downs Royal Air Force Photographer MND(SE) Basrah

Japanese join Coalition forces

By Sgt. Brianne Pippin
III Corps
Public Affairs Office

BAGHDAD — Col. Sam Palmer, grew up, like many children of the time, with firsthand knowledge that, at one time, Japan was viewed as a bitter enemy.

Now almost 60 years after the signing of the peace agreement with Japan that ended World War II, Palmer looks across the table every morning to see a Japanese major as a member of his own staff.

"It's amazing to think that our two countries were at one time bitter enemies. Now, (Japan) is one of our greatest allies," said Palmer, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, III Corps, Chief

of Plans, Civil Affairs. "It's similar to when the (Berlin) Wall came down and suddenly you're ... looking across the table at the guy who was your enemy only a few years before, and you're working on the same projects."

For about the past two weeks, Japanese Maj. Taka Hideshima has been "the guy" across the table at the CJTF-7 civil affairs morning meetings.

"He's a terribly hard worker and has been putting in long hours," said Palmer, referring to the current civil affairs project, the Hajj, the Islamic faith's annual pilgrimage to Mecca, Hideshima has been working on with an American counterpart. "He has been a great asset to our operations and has already contributed a

lot in the two weeks he has been with us. I look forward to working with him, and seeing great things from him over the next sixth months he is with us."

While Palmer has worked with a number of allied soldiers in his nearly 24 years of service, he realizes the historic significance of the Japanese military joining a coalition effort of this magnitude.

"It's a historic moment, as the Japanese government is now willing to permit its military to take its place among other nations in security operations and in the war against terrorism," said Palmer.

While the first wave of Japanese troops

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Inside this week ...

Rockets near BIAP

Troopers marvel at their biggest rocket find yet.
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550 miles in four days

25th ID (Light) Team travels from Kuwait to Northern Iraq.
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Transformation project

Renovation transforms mass-grave site into a park.
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Paratroopers' preparedness pays off

Story and photo by
Spc. Michael J. Carden
3rd Brigade Combat Team
Public Affairs

AL FALLUJAH — U.S. Central Command commander, Gen. John Abizaid, and the 82nd Airborne Division commander, Maj. Gen. Charles Swannack, were in downtown Fallujah Feb. 12 intending to view a Fallujah Provisional Authority Council (FPAC) meeting. They were also there to observe the 3rd Brigade Combat Team (BCT) paratroopers award patrol vehicles to the city's police force.

Instead, the generals got a first-hand view of what their Soldiers are facing daily in this town.

Just as they do every Thursday, the FPAC held their weekly governance meeting and, as always, the paratroopers of 1st Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment (Task Force 1 Panther), were there to provide security for the council members. This meeting, however, was over before it ever started. The troops never had the chance to present the vehicles either, and what simply began as a communal visit, quickly turned violent.

Within a matter of minutes after passing through the concrete barriers surrounding the mayor's office, the troops were engaged by anti-Coalition personnel. The insurgents fired three rocket propelled grenades, seemingly followed by sporadic small arms fire from AK-47s.

Along with the generals, troops took cover behind vehicles and thick concrete walls as they determined the attackers firing position. They spotted two individuals on a roof top about two blocks north of



Paratroopers take cover behind a barricade Feb. 12 during an insurgent attack on Coalition forces.

the mayor's office. The troops then volleyed a stream of M4 carbine rounds.

Even with several troops on the ground and rooftops around the mayor's office, they could not stop the insurgents' attack. The aggressors continued to spray the area with bullets.

"The bad guys were getting really close," said Pfc. Isreal Alvarado, 82nd Military Police Company. "I could hear the bullets ricocheting off the wall next to me."

Gunfire was exchanged for about ten minutes. This is somewhat unusual when compared to the many previous hostilities they have encountered at the mayor's office, this urban battlefield in Fallujah.

"Usually, the fight is over pretty quick for us," said Command Sgt. Maj. Bryant Lambert, Task Force 1 Panther, "but these individuals had pretty good cover."

Once the gunfight came to a halt, a squad of troops maneuvered towards the assailants, but came up empty handed.

The assailants managed to escape into their vehicle.

During this time Abizaid, Swannack and their security team convoyed out of the city to safety. "It seems like our guys have the situation under control," Abizaid said. "This is all part of serving in Iraq."

Meanwhile, the troops continued pursuit of their aggressors. They forced the

See **TROOPERS**, Page 16



Soldiers from the first graduating class of the Platoon Leaders Basic Course in Al Qayyarah. The Iraqi soldiers took part in two weeks of intensive leadership training.

Northern Iraq Regional Training Center graduates first platoon leader's class

Story and photo submitted
by Task Force Olympia
Public Affairs

MOSUL — The next step in building a stronger Iraqi Army began today as the first officers graduated from the Northern Iraq Regional Training Center Platoon Leader's Basic Course in Al Qayyarah Feb. 9.

The ceremony marks the completion of two weeks of training designed to provide the Iraqi military with strong leaders. Eleven officers of various ranks received their graduation diploma as various dignitaries looked on.

"This is the first graduating

class of officers and now these future leaders have a chance to show their soldiers the knowledge they have learned," said Col. Mohammed Ahmed Abdullah, NIRTC commandant.

Soldiers from 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division (Stryker Brigade Combat Team), under the operational control of Task Force Olympia, provided advisers and other assistance to help ensure the training mission was successful.

"We are very glad to be partners with you to make this training a success," said Brigadier Gen. Carter F. Ham, commander, Task Force Olympia.

The NIRTC opened in mid-January and was the inspiration of Maj. Gen. David H. Petraeus, commander, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). The new training center instructs non-commissioned officers (NCOs), lieutenants, and new recruits in areas such as leadership, job proficiency, and professionalism. Twenty-two NCO's from the Hamam Al Alil Iraqi Civil Defense Corps company made up the historic first graduating class of NIRTC on Jan. 31.

Multinational Brigade-North continues to work with the citizens and leaders of Iraq to make it a safe, prosperous, and democratic nation.

Unsung Heroes

Marching the extra mile across Iraq



Pvt. McCormick

Pvt. Kyle P. McCormick, from Kingsley, Mich., has been in the army for eight months. McCormick is a member of the 3rd Howitzer Battery 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment from Fort Polk, LA.

McCormick, 19, has been in Iraq for a few months and was assigned here right out of Advanced Individual Training. He is a 13 B, Cannon crew member on the M 198 towed howitzer. He sets the azimuth of fire and prepares it for firing.

"He is a motivator, an outstanding Soldier and sets the example," said Sgt. Raymond L. Webster, team leader.



Pfc. Palacios

Pfc. Rogenbert Palacios, 25, has been in the Army for almost a year. He is from North Hollywood, Calif., and is assigned to the 3rd Howitzer Battery 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment from Fort Polk, LA.

He joined the army because he wanted to see what the Army was like. "I wanted to see exotic places like Baghdad," he said. "Where the people are friendly and they treat us with respect." He is part of the advanced party and sets up the radio.

"Whether its good or bad, he does his job and doesn't complain," said Sgt. Raymond L. Webster, team leader.



Spc. McCormick

Spc. Aaron J. McCormick is from Harco, Calif. He joined the Army over two years ago. He is a trooper with the 82nd Airborne Division, 2 - 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, Company A.

McCormick, 22, joined the Army to serve his country and to preserve freedom. He wants to become a helicopter pilot and get a degree in zoology.

"He is a good hard working Soldier," said Sgt. Jacob J. Mathews, squad leader. "He works alot of thankless hours and doesnt complain."



Pfc. Roles

Pfc. Sidney A. Roles, Cleveland, has been in the Army for 20 months. He joined for the educational benefits. Roles is attached to the 82nd Airborne Division, 2-504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, Company A.

Roles, 23, said "September 11th finalized his decision to sign-up for the military." He has been in Iraq for one month after spending over eight months in Afghanistan.

Sgt. Jacob J. Mathews, his squad leader, said "He is always on the job because they are part of Americas' Guard of Honor."

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of accomplishments should
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1st AD delivers supplies to school

Story and photo by
Capt. Jean-Pierre Brown
1st Brigade Combat Team
Public Affairs Officer

BAGHDAD — As on any day in Baghdad, the sun rose on the students of the Al-Jasmine primary school located in the neighborhood of Mustansyria.

But on this bright day, the students were in for a big surprise.

It was 10:30 a.m. on Jan. 26 and, as the children were standing quietly in the back yard of the school preparing for the last day of examinations, U.S. Army Soldiers appeared.

About a dozen Soldiers of the 1st Brigade Combat Team including some from 1st Battalion, 36th Infantry Regiment, arrived with loads of school supplies for the children of Al-Jasmine.

Soldiers enlisted the help of a disabled student in a wheelchair to distribute hundreds of backpacks loaded with school supplies of all types, to include pencils, crayons, copybooks, erasers, and much other needed material.

McDonalds Corp. donated more than \$6,000 worth of crayons, and the citizens of New



Students in the Al-Jasmine Primary School in the Mustansyria neighborhood show off school supplies donated by McDonalds Corporation and the citizens of New Ulm, Minn.

Ulm, Minn., added nearly \$10,000 worth of other supplies to the cause.

The supplies were mailed directly to the "Ready First" Brigade, and its commander,

Col. Peter Mansoor, arranged for the distribution to schools like Al-Jasmine in the Rusafa district.

The charity event began with a speech from Lieutenant Colonel

Chuck Sexton.

"We would like you to be our kids for a few moments, because we miss our families back home and consider all Iraqi children as members of our extended fami-

ly," said Sexton, 1-36 Infantry commander. "So please accept our gifts."

"These school supplies are important to us because you children represent the future of Iraq," Mansoor told the students. "Use them for learning, use them with our best wishes, use them in peace."

The supplies are not gifts from the U.S. Government, he said. "(They are) from your friends in the McDonalds Corporation, the people of New Ulm, Minn., and from many of our friends and families in the United States."

Mansoor said that organizations and individuals in the United States asked how they could help the Iraqi children. He said his reply was to "send school supplies for the kids — they are eager to learn but lack a great deal of support."

Sexton said that he was very happy to give the children these gifts, for when he is amongst the children, he feels at peace and far away from military matters.

These contributions were but a simple gift, but they symbolize a tremendous amount of caring and commitment extended and expressed by all Americans towards the Iraqi people, he said.

National Guard recognizes engineers' work



Spc. Steven Carlson, from Calhoun City, Miss., is pinned with the Bronze Star by Maj. Gen. Ray Odierno, Task Force Ironhorse and 4th ID commanding general, in a ceremony Feb. 5, 2004, in Tikrit.

Story and photo by **Spc. Benjamin R. Kibbey**
367th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

TIKRIT — Members of a Mississippi National Guard unit were recognized Feb. 5 by the 4th Infantry Division for their contributions made during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The 223rd Combat Engineer Battalion (Heavy) has been working with Task Force Ironhorse since the beginning of operations in Iraq, and was credited with exceptional work throughout the Task Force Ironhorse area of responsibility.

During the ceremony, 31 members of the battalion were awarded the Bronze Star for individual accomplishments by Maj. Gen. Ray Odierno, commanding general of the 4th ID and Task Force Ironhorse. In addition, four Soldiers from the battalion were presented with Purple Hearts for injuries sustained as a result of direct enemy actions.

"That's not an award I enjoy giving," Odierno said about presenting the Purple Hearts. "But, I enjoy when (the Soldiers) are standing there looking healthy."

It was an unusually special day for two noncommissioned officers from the battalion who received Bronze Stars. 1st Sgt. David Cecil Mitchell, a native of Calhoun City, Miss., and his son, Sgt. Joseph Brian Mitchell, who lives in Forest, Miss., were both presented with Bronze Stars on the same

day, which also marked the elder Mitchell's birthday.

"As a father, it makes me real proud to serve my country and have my son by my side," said Mitchell, who has another son serving in the Army as an officer.

One of the four Soldiers presented Purple Hearts, Sgt. Thomas Dye, a resident of Parchman, Miss., was injured when his convoy struck an improvised explosive device. Injured by flying debris and glass from the shattered windshield of his vehicle, Dye was assigned to light duty for a few weeks and then was ready to go out again.

"All of us old Soldiers, it's hard to keep us down," the 24-year veteran said with a smile.

Another recipient of the Purple Heart, Spc. Steven Carlson, a native of Calhoun City, Miss., was struck in the chest by a mortar fragment as he was exiting his Humvee during a mortar attack at Camp Warhorse. He counts himself fortunate that the worst of his injuries was a hairline fracture in his sternum.

"That's the only reward I really need, is to walk away from my incident," said Carlson, who is the assistant manager of a Winn-Dixie grocery store back in Mississippi.

"The awards given out today don't even touch the work done by the battalion," said Lt. Col. Rubel West, the 223rd commander, noting the sacrifices and hard work of all the Soldiers in the battalion.

RECON team's investigation yields discovery of stashed rockets

Story and photos by
Spc. Michael J. Carden
 3rd Brigade Combat Team
 Public Affairs

AL KARMA —For weeks the 82nd Airborne Division's 3rd Brigade Combat Team (BCT) has been searching for ways to stop the improvised rocket attacks Coalition Forces have received in and around Al Karma, Al Fallujah and Baghdad.

High-technology surveillance radars and counter-fire impact areas have led the counter-mortar reconnaissance team to a number of locations where these attacks may have occurred.

At these locations, the RECON team investigated tire tracks, foot prints, ground indentions and debris for evidence of rocket launches being staged. They also spoke with many people in these areas in hope of gaining some useful information about the attacks.

The most recent of these investigations took place Feb. 9 in a farming area approximately 25 miles west of Baghdad International Airport (BIAP). The 3rd BCT believes that this was the staging area for an attack the previous night on Coalition soldiers occupying BIAP, which damaged a radio tower and wounded one soldier.

The RECON team found a lot of evidence here. They discovered fire wire used to initiate the rocket launches, back blast marks on the ground and launcher imprints.

"This is it," said Maj. Steve Sears, fire support officer, 3rd BCT. "This is where they (anti-Coalition persons) launched their attack."

As the team continued their investigation, an Iraqi man, on his way home from work, approached the troops. The team's Iraqi translator, Jamal, explained to him the events from the night before and asked if he saw the attack in progress.



Sgt. Jimmy Hacker, 3rd Platoon, 82nd Airborne Division Military Police Company, and Jamal, translator, attach a winch to a 127mm rocket launcher system to pull it out of a marsh. Feb. 9.

Without hesitation, the middle-aged Iraqi man shook his head. "Yes, and I saw where they buried the weapons."

During their conversation, the Iraqi man began to express his willingness to assist Coalition Forces in capturing the "evil people" who operate near his home. "We (Iraqis and Americans) need to work together to build a good future for Iraq, for our children."

The Iraqi man led the troops to two marshy areas about 800 meters south from where the launches emerged. At the first marsh, 16 improvised rocket launchers and five 127mm rockets were found. In the other, ten launchers had been hoarded away.

"This is our biggest rocket find yet," Sears said.

The troops marveled at their find, studying the design of the carbine steel launchers. Each of the eight-foot-long tubes was paired with another by welded brackets with two variable legs to adjust fire distance. The launcher systems were also equipped with hinge-attached brack-

ets that allowed the operator to prop the systems on the back of a pick-up truck.

"They're pretty well made," said Staff Sgt. Matthew Palmer, 3rd Platoon, 82nd Airborne Division Military Police Company. "They put a lot of effort into constructing the launchers."

The Soldiers then made radio contact with an explosive ordinance team to dispose of the launchers and munitions.

Shortly after EOD arrived, two of the rocket launcher systems were set aside for further examination. The remaining systems were destroyed in place with plastic explosives. Local children were nearby to witness the detonation.

"We're happy you (Coalition Forces) found the weapons," said an Iraqi boy. "We don't want trouble for the people of Iraq or the American Soldiers. We just want the violence to stop."

With the continuous flow of positive information between Coalition Forces and the Iraqi people, such as this day's events, these children may get their wish. "We need the peace," said another Iraqi man.

Jamal attests the pride and courage shown by his fellow Iraqis' help in finding the cache.

"Many people are scared to help the Coalition because they fear the bad Iraqis will harm them or their families," he said. "But if everyone (Iraqis) continues to help the American Soldiers, the American Soldiers will help everyone to stop this war; then we can rebuild Iraq."



82nd Airborne Division's 3rd Brigade Combat Team Paratroopers from the Counter-mortar RECON team, examine a cache of 127mm rocket launcher systems they found Feb. 9 in a farming area approximately 25 miles west of Baghdad International Airport.



82nd Airborne Division's 3rd Brigade Combat Team Paratroopers from the Counter-mortar RECON team, pull a 127mm rocket launcher system out of a marsh Feb. 9 in a farming area approximately 25 miles west of Baghdad International Airport.



Paratroopers examine a cache of 127mm rocket launcher systems they found Feb. 9 in a farming area approximately 25 miles west of Baghdad International Airport.

1st AD completes community projects

Story by Mark S. Rickert
372nd Mobile Public
Affairs Detachment

BAGHDAD — In the western region of Abu Ghraib, the community has plenty to celebrate. In less than two months, their water is safer to drink, the condition of the mosque is better, and residents now have a medical clinic close at hand.

During a ribbon cutting ceremony the 414th Civil Affairs Battalion, an Army Reserve unit based in Utica, N.Y., gathered with the residents of a small community within the Abu Ghraib neighborhood district to celebrate the completion of a medical clinic, the restoration of a mosque and a new water system Jan 24.

Now that the Abala Medical Clinic is open, it will provide primary medical treatment. Until now, the people traveled 10 miles for the nearest hospital—a long distance for people with little transportation, said Sgt. Amy Fish, a member of the direct support team for the 414th.

"We're proud to open the medical clinic here because it is providing medical service for an under-served population," said



Photo by Spc. Chad D. Wilkerson, 372nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Sgt. Amy Fish, a member of the direct support team of the 414th Civil Affairs Battalion, based in Utica, N.Y., and local Abu Ghraib community officials cut the ribbon at the grand opening of the Abala Medical Clinic west of Baghdad late last month.

Col. John Huntley, commander of the 414th.

While contractors started rebuilding the clinic, the civil affairs team acquired funds to repair the mosque next door. According to Staff Sgt. Louis

Poliselli, leader of the 414th direct support team, backing this second project supported the coalition forces' overall goal of winning the hearts and minds of the people.

"This shows that we're work-

ing with religious leaders," said Poliselli. "It doesn't matter if they are Christian or Muslim, we want to help everybody out."

"They see that we're willing to do anything we can to help rebuild the country," said Fish.

"This means a lot to the people here."

As the funds for the two projects came in, the civil affairs team went a step further and obtained enough money to reroute the community's drinking water. According to Fish, the people in the area drew from wells with a high concentration of sulfur. This made the drinking water unsafe to consume.

"Now we've tapped into a mainline that is hooked to a purification system," said Fish. "From the mainline, we ran drinking-water pipes to the schools in this area, as well as the medical center and the mosque."

Now, as the community celebrates this step toward better living conditions, the Soldiers also celebrate the progress they've made. As Huntley said, it's a small step toward a promising future for Iraq.

"We are in the business of pulling together infrastructure," said Huntley. "It's going to help the county carry on by itself after we leave. So we're very interested in setting the stage for success. It's just a start, but we're going to use this as a spring board to continue progress here."

GIs complete first-ever EO course in Iraq

Story and photo
by Spc. Jeannie Kinville
1st Armor Division
Public Affairs Office

BAGHDAD — The students were ready for their final examination. This was the make or break point for Soldiers from around the Task Force 1st Armored Division area participating in the first Equal Opportunity Leaders Course held at Baghdad International Airport.

All 29 students in the weeklong course were certified as Equal Opportunity Leaders in what was a "very demanding and extensive course in an already trying war zone," said Sgt. 1st Class Lucia Cantu, an EO adviser with Task Force 1st AD and an instructor for the course.

"They all did so well on the exam," she said "I'm so proud of them."

"Our goal is to have EO representatives in each unit," said Sgt. 1st Class Johnny Pippen, Task Force 1st AD Senior EO adviser. "The best proactive step in implementing EO is through education."

He organized the course to ensure all units had an EOL representative.

Pippen enlisted the help of other EOA's throughout 1AD and from 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment to help teach.

"I had three Soldiers in this class and I



Students completing the Task Force 1st Armored Division's Equal Opportunity Leaders Course tackle the end of course examination. The weeklong course took place last week on Baghdad International Airport.

felt I should help 1AD instruct this," said Master Sgt. Tim Millsap, 3rd Brigade Combat Team EOA.

Pippen said getting the course together took coordination and permission from commanders for EOA's to leave their normal duties to come teach.

"The course is normally two weeks for a total of 80 training hours, but it was compressed into one week," said Millsap.

Students underwent various practical exercises, two quizzes, a presentation and a final exam before receiving their

Certificate of Training for the EOLC.

EO is a commander's program and they select a noncommissioned officer as their representative for the EOLC to help with EO issues and training for the unit.

"Our main objective is to certify NCOs as EOL's to represent commanders," said Millsap. "They are the EO subject matter experts in the unit."

These subject matters include issues on race, religion, gender and national origin said Pippen. "The Army's greatest concept is its drive for diversity," said Pippen.

"The dynamics of EOLC is designed for people to put aside their attitudes, beliefs and values when dealing with others. We call it baggage," said Pippen.

Soldiers learn the roles of being an EOL such as where to find EO information, how to fulfill training requirements and conduct reports, said Millsap.

"The best part was the facilitation portion, just watching them conduct classes at unit level," said Millsap.

The EOL is designed to handle issues at the lowest level possible, said Pippen.

"A lot of incidents go unreported," said Sgt. Elondious D. Rose, a supply NCO assigned to Company E, 123rd Main Support Battalion. "I think now they will report them because I'm approachable and appeal to everybody."

Pippen emphasizes that no one should stay silent about complaints they have. Any incident that goes unreported can turn into a major problem later on.

"We need to focus on Army policies and not let incidents happen without reporting them," said Rose.

"When I talk to the students, they tell me EO is needed in units," Pippen said. "More so out here (during deployment) because we are around each other 24/7."

"I think it's a good position to have," said Rose. "I'll be able to help Soldiers."

Congressmen visit Iraq, evaluate troop conditions



A paratrooper from Company C, 1st Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, demonstrates and explains the design and use of the interceptor body armor Feb. 8 to members of the House Armed Forces Services Committee at Forward Operating Base St. Mere, near Fallujah.

Story and photos by
Spc. Michael J. Carden
 3rd Brigade Combat Team
 Public Affairs
 82nd Airborne Division

ST. MERE — Several members of the Armed Forces Services Committee flew into forward operating base St. Mere, just outside of Fallujah, Feb. 8 to visit with the 82nd Airborne Division's 3rd Brigade Combat Team.

This particular congressional delegation is responsible for the funding allocated for the living conditions, equipment, capabilities and technology needed for the military to accomplish their missions.

"We're here to look at and evaluate the situation in Iraq and to see what needs there might be in terms of facilities and equipment," said Silvestre Reyes, a Democratic Representative from Texas.

Along with Reyes, Republican Representatives Duncan Hunter of California, Jim Saxton of New Jersey, Ron Lewis of Kentucky and their staff made the trip to assess the equipment used by the 3rd BCT. The committee members listened closely as the troops demonstrated and explained the various gear and vehicles they have been using in the 3rd BCT's area of operation in Iraq.

Some of the gear and vehicles on display for the congressmen were the interceptor body armor, the M4 Carbine, night vision goggles, cold weather desert boots, mine detectors and Highly Mobile Multi-Wheeled Vehicles, such as the M1114 Up-Armored HMMWV.

"Whether it's body armor or better force protection, it's important for them (representatives) to hear what the troops have to say because they are the guys and gals on the front line," said Sgt. Maj. Benjamin Burgos, command sergeant major, 3rd BCT.

Although the congressmen were impressed with the troopers' demonstrations and knowledge of their equipment, they shared their concerns for equipment and facilities improvements.

"It looks like we're going to be here (Iraq) for a long time," Reyes said. "So, we need to make sure the troops have everything they need to have the upper hand in finding the enemy."

Since the 3rd BCT has been in Iraq, they have conducted numerous successful combat, civil affairs and civil military operations. Their living conditions have also been fairly comfortable in their base camp for the past five months with more than enough living quarters, spacious work areas and morale and welfare facilities such as a gym and post exchange.

However, with three times as many Marines (4,500) expected to occupy FOB St. Mere, as early as March, much progress is being made to accommodate their arrival. Several buildings are in the process of being renovated and reconstructed. A number of trailers are also being set up in the base camp for the Marines to work and live out of until the 3rd BCT redeploy back to Fort Bragg, N.C.

"We continue to need better facilities that are going to be adequate for our troops," Reyes added.

After the committee toured the FOB

and learned about the 3rd BCT's equipment and techniques, they sat down with a few soldiers from their respective states for dinner at the Kellogg Brown and Root dining facility here.

There, each of the representatives took the time out of their busy schedules to ask how the troops are handling their deployment. They were concerned about the phone and internet privileges and how their families were doing back in the United States, said Sgt. 1st Class Benny Dobbs Jr., equal opportunity advisor, 3rd BCT.

"We didn't really talk business," said Dobbs, a Kentucky native. "He (Lewis) was more concerned about our families and any personal issues that we may have, and that impressed me very much."

The soldiers were not the only ones impressed by the dinner conversations. The committee members were also very appreciative for the company they enjoyed chow with.

"My favorite part of the visit was having the opportunity to sit down and talk to the soldiers," Reyes said. "You really get a good grasp of what the morale is and how the soldiers are doing."

After chow, the committee concluded their visit with the 3rd BCT. Not only did they build a foundation for what projects they may initiate future funds for, but they also have a better understanding of the hardships and challenges the troops are dealing with in Iraq.

"We're leaving here with the feeling of respect and understanding for the dedication, commitment and professionalism of our military," Reyes said.

Iraq in briefs

Mortar hits near hotel with Japanese journalists inside

SAMAWAH — A mortar landed near a hotel housing Japanese journalists Thursday in a southern Iraqi town where Japanese troops have deployed, officials said. The blast shattered windows in a nearby building but caused no injuries.

The 60-mm mortar hit at about 5 a.m. in an intersection some 50 yards from the hotel in Samawah, said a security guard, Numan Khadim Amar. The launcher was found, along with a few more rounds, about 2 miles away in the northern part of the city.

Colonel Yasushi Kiyota, one of the commanders of the Japanese forces deploying at Samawa, said Dutch troops who patrol the city were investigating. He said there were no injuries.

About 100 Japanese troops are setting up a camp about four miles outside town, where a total of about 600 troops are to be based in Japan's biggest overseas military mission since World War II and its first to a war zone in half a century.

The Japanese are to carry out humanitarian missions focusing on reconstruction of the area's battered infrastructure.

U.S., Iraqi police capture more of Iraq's most wanted

BAGHDAD — American forces in Iraq have arrested two of the remaining most-wanted members of Saddam Hussein's government, U.S. defense officials said in press conferences Feb. 9 and Sunday.

Muhammad Zimam Abdul al-Razzaq, No. 41, and Muhsin Khadr al-Khafaji, No. 48 on the 55 most-wanted list, were apprehended last week in the Baghdad area, officials said. The capture of Zimam was orchestrated wholly by the Iraqi police, the first time the Iraqi authorities conducted an apprehension on their own. The officials did not say who turned Khadr over.

U.S. Central Command described Khadr as the chairman of Saddam Hussein's Baath Party in the Qadisiyah Governorate, a region in south-central Iraq. In December, military officials announced he had a \$1 million bounty on his head; it was unclear whether that money would be collected. The arrests leave only 10 of the 55 most-wanted still at large.

TF All American pays informant for tip leading to HVT 54 capture

AR RAMADI — Task Force All American paid \$1 million to an Iraqi informant who gave them information leading to the arrest of Khamis Sirhan al-Muhammad, a major figure in the anti-U.S. insurgency who was listed as #54 on the Coalition's 55 most wanted list.

Sirhan was the former Ba'ath Party regional chairman and was considered by many to be one of the most dangerous men in the Al Anbar province. "The capture of this key financier and facilitator was a major blow to the anti-coalition forces in Al Anbar," said Maj. Gen. Charles Swannack, commander of the 82nd Airborne Division and Task Force All American.



Above: Pfc. Michelle Katenay, a Soldier with Company B 225th FSB, provides security during a convoy stop north of Baghdad Feb. 5.



Above Right: Spc. Marcus Carver, 105mm Howitzer gunner, and Staff Sgt. Manuel Guevararuz, 105mm Howitzer chief of section, both with Battery A, 2nd Battalion, 11th Field Artillery, show patriotism with a U.S. flag hanging behind them, as they wait for the convoy to start at Camp Virginia, Kuwait Feb. 3.

Story and photos by
Spc. Sean Kimmons
25th Infantry Division
Public Affairs Office

Soldiers from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division (Light) headed out of Camp Virginia, Kuwait to conduct a convoy of more than 550 miles in a four-day period ending at their command posts in Northern Iraq Feb. 2-4.

Soldiers cross the desert

Lt. Col. Mark Dewhurst, commander of 1st Bn., 21st Inf. Rgt. commended the Soldiers for the fact that no member of Task Force Gimlet received injuries on the convoy due to enemy contact.

Task Force Gimlet, Task Force Golden Dragon that departed Feb. 2 and Task Force Wolfhound that departed Feb. 4 each convoyed about 200 vehicles that were broken down into five serials.

Out of all the serials, none sustained injuries from enemy contact.

Serial 3 out of Task Force Gimlet was one of the safe and lucky serials. The same hazards existed for them as did to the other serials, but the only problems they faced were a few flat tires.

Even with the possibility of hazards along the route it wouldn't have stopped any serials from convoying, since

convoys are the best solution to haul vehicles and equipment to forward operating bases and also to give Soldiers a taste of what's to come in their deployment.

Soldiers throughout the serials were pleasantly surprised by the enthusiastic response from the Iraqi people along most phases of the convoy route, but the long drive became an unpleasant experience to the drivers.



Above: Iraqi children cheer on Serial 3, Task Force Gimlet inside of Tikrit Feb. 6.



Vehicles from Serial 3, Task Force Gimlet roll into a combat support center near Tikrit to rest for the night Feb. 4.

Ist AD zeros in mortar sights

Story and photo by Staff Sgt. Mark Bell
372nd Mobile Public Affairs Division

BAGHDAD – Though similar in concept to the M-16 “zeroing” process, the results were very different when a 1st Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, 1st Armored Division, mortar section registered, or “zeroed,” their weapons system recently in southern Baghdad.

Using the large 120 mm mortar ammunition round, the seven-man mortar team from Apache Troop, based in Bodingen, Germany, was quick to place rounds within 50 meters of their intended target to register the team’s weapon.

“Our goal is to put rounds on the target,” said Sgt. 1st Class David Yomes, 32, a mortar section sergeant from Tacoma, Wash.

Using long-range tactical radios to “walk” the impacts of the high-explosives to within meters of a known target in an open field, forward observers who were positioned more than 3,000 meters from the loud, thunderous thump of gun powder launching the 30-pound munitions were able to allow the gunners to register their tubes using only a few rounds.

As the mortar plate settled into the mud-like swamp of Camp Steel Falcon, the crackling sounds of the distant forward observers calling minute corrections gives the team the knowledge they are only one or two rounds from registering and calling it quits for the afternoon.

After two successful near impacts and the third mortar round already in the hands of the assistant mortar gunner, “Check Firing, Check Firing, Check Firing!!” screamed across the radio speakers from the brigade tactical operations center, instantly halting all fire-mission activities.

As team members echoed the commands, the round was slowly placed back into the protective casing and members of the team wondered about what could be causing such an action. Anything from innocent bystanders entering the impact zone to aerial disasters waiting to happen can stop all mortar registration missions.

Several minutes later, two UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters appeared over the 20-foot-high wall separating Camp Steel Falcon from the rest of southern Baghdad — stopping all mortar registration activities.

Although the chances of a small round impacted a moving aircraft is slim, the phrase, “Big bullet, little sky,” is how the aviators see mortar and artillery rounds, said Maj. Rick Bower, DIVARTY fire support officer.

Bower said because of safety systems built into the mortar registering process, any aircraft flying near the path of a mortar round automatically ceases all fire missions.

After a few minutes, the sounds of the rotor blades’ increasing speed and lifting the aircraft up and out of sight of the team brought the adrenaline rush back to the muddy mortar pits.

Within seconds, the mortar team’s talk transformed from a friendly chat to the shouts of commands. With the “green” light from the brigade headquarters tactical operations center, Yomes’ crew quickly readjusted their tubes and readied a third mortar round again.

Using the mortar ballistic computer, Yomes was able to accurately and quickly determine any corrections to the direction, elevation and the amount of explosive charge used to zero in on the stationary target.

“It definitely helps me determine the firing solution for my guns,” he said after successfully registering his mortar tubes. “Within two minutes, we are able to send rounds down range and on target because of the advance firing system we have today.”

With the earth-shattering thump and the smell and sight of expelled smoke, the team sent another round safely down range and on target showing their calculations were correct.

“The best thing about working with mortars is you can shoot and hit them (the enemy), but they can’t see you,” said Pfc. Obie Adler, 21, from Manchester, N.H.

Although the whole science of slide rulers, charts and basic instinct have been almost completely replaced by high-tech computers and weather detachments assisting the delivery of effective, lethal explosives more than 3

kilometers away, Adler said it still takes the soldier to get the job done.

“I love this job,” he said. “No one understands us, but everyone wants to drop a round in the tube.”



An Apache Troop mortarman from 1st Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, 1st Armored Division prepares to send a round down range during the mortar section’s recent registering of their weapons.

Coalition engineers survey Basrah Village

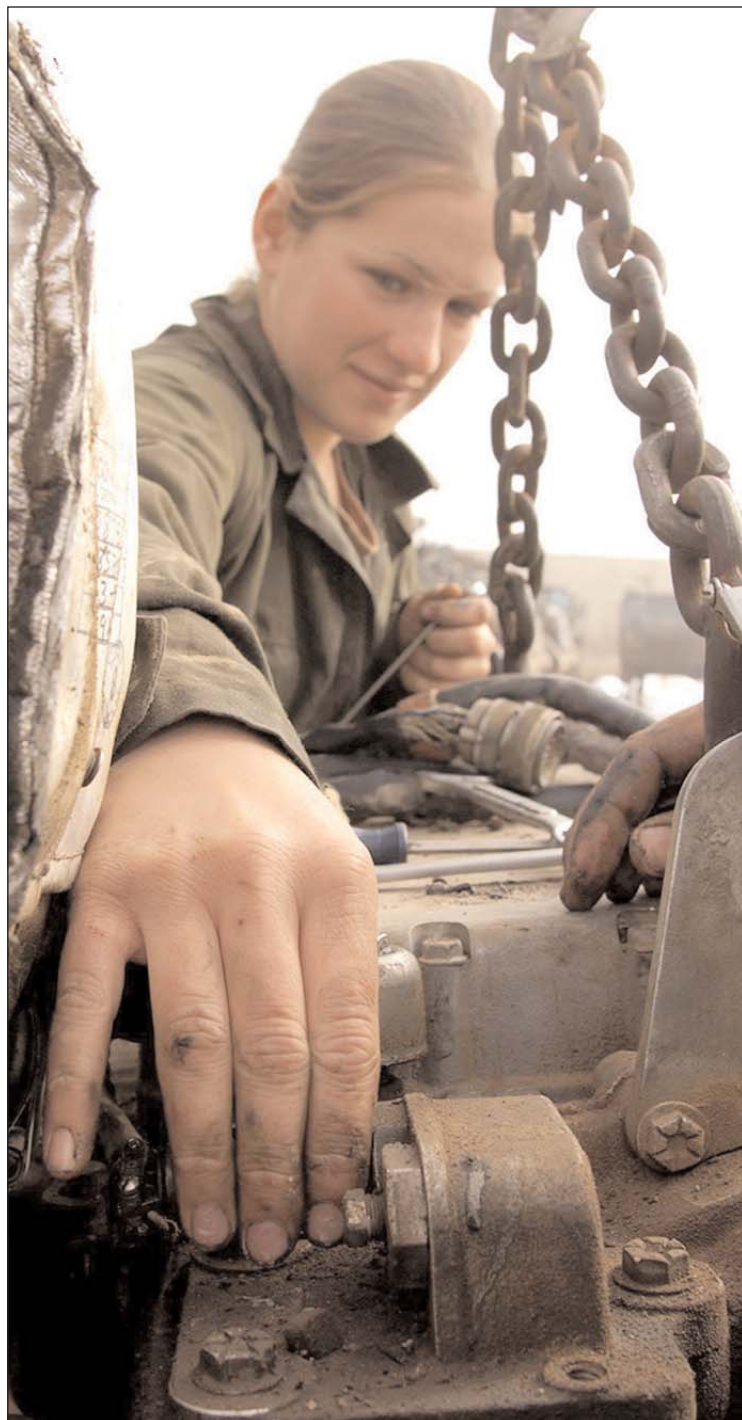


Left: Sgt Terry Stephenson with 2nd Squadron Royal Air Force, Maj. Justin Butah, officer commanding British combat camera, and Sgt. Christopher Crawford with the 55th Sig. Co., U.S. combat camera in the village of Lossiemouth, Basrah Feb. 5.

The New Zealand Engineer Regiment working with the Multi National Division/South East, visited the village to discuss and survey where they want to widen the road as well as expand and raise the land where their houses are built in the marsh. During the rainy winter season the village floods and the people have to move to higher ground. There is also talk about starting a project to get running water to them.

Photo by Spc. Rachel Ahner, 982nd Signal Company Combat Camera

Mechanic keeps rolling with the vehicles



Pfc. Eva Hodge, 19, from Oakdale, Calif., a track mechanic with 69th Chemical Compay, 1st Armored Division Artillery, works on a transmission oil filter to repair a 3,000-pound diesel engine. Hodge works on the fuel sending pump on the V6, 212-horsepower Detroit diesel engine.

**Story and Photo by
Staff Sgt. Mark Bell**
372nd Mobile Public
Affairs Detachment

BAGHDAD — With a 3,000-pound diesel engine hovering only inches above her head, Pfc. Eva Hodge, 19, from Oakdale Calif., vigorously tugs on the wrench to loosen a bolt that will allow her and fellow mechanics to remove the vital part to repair another disabled tracked vehicle.

That vehicle will keep the 69th Chemical Company, based in Hanau, Germany, moving forward to support the 1st Armored Division Artillery in southern Baghdad.

"She's just one of the guys and fits right in," Spc. Shannon McFarlane, 22, from Green Bay, Wisc., said while watching Hodge struggle with the wrench to remove the fuel pump on the V-6, 212-horsepower Detroit Engine that powers the M1059/A3 smoke generator carrier.

"But you know what? She's an awesome mechanic, and I have never seen someone work so hard to accomplish the mission."

Whether it's the early-morning hours making final adjustments to an engine or the late nights using vehicle lights to illuminate the work area while maneuvering the bulky engine blocks in and out of the close-fitting engine compartments, Hodge's perseverance and desire to shatter stereotypes in a predominantly male occupational area sets her aside from the other generator and light-wheel vehicle mechanics.

With her fingers noticeably worn from months of working in an arduous mechanical environment and her fingernails seem-

ingly permanently covered in grease and grime, Hodge said she takes pride that she's not like other women.

"She gets dirty and doesn't mind having her nails full of grease," McFarlane said. "It's just the way she is. I know, for a fact, she would keep things rolling around here."

Brought up in California, she said, joining the Army was something no one was prepared for.

"Definitely, no one ever expected to me to sign up for the Army, let alone being a track mechanic," Hodge said laughing. "Everyone thought I was just a normal girl."

For the past 19 months, this not-so-normal mechanic has been busy working with some of the largest and heaviest tracked vehicles in the Army's inventory.

Self-described as "dirty," Hodge said at the end of the day her contentment comes from knowing she completed a task which enables her unit to operate seamlessly.

"It's the satisfaction that I fixed something, and it's running because of me," she said. "My hands get really tore up here, but who cares about the little things. It's about completing the mission and getting these tracks running again."

With long days and working into the early-evening hours, Hodge admits the work is monotonous and difficult.

"It's tough sometimes to go out there every day, but I work with good people so it's kind of fun," she said. "We are doing the same thing over and over again - every day. The thing that keeps me going out there is the guys I work with."

No matter the situation, Hodge said her family of six "Yankees" or track mechanics makes the days go by as they slowly inch toward their redeployment back to Germany.

"It's boring," she said about the thought of working in an office. "I just can't sit inside all day and do nothing. I need to be working with my hands. A lot of people tell us we are crazy and that we do crazy things, but you need to be a little crazy to be out here everyday on these tracks."

Scheduled to re-deploy in early spring, Hodge said being away from her little brother is the most difficult part of her mission in central Iraq.

"It's funny, he is always irritating me, but I miss that now," she said about her 13-year-old brother, Chris.

Hodge said the thing that she misses most about her brother is his ability to rewire things. "He always plays these little jokes. He'll rewire the lights in the bathroom and even my car, and he is always upsetting me. But who cares now - I miss him. He thinks I am the coolest sister ever because not too many boys have big sisters in the Army in Iraq."

Hodge said she hopes that someday she can look back and remember the time she spent with her friends and away from family and know that she did her part to make a difference.

Hodge admits the Army is only temporary. "I am going to get out and go to college for a business degree," she said. "It's a great thing I am doing here. I am helping the fight on terrorism, something I'll always keep with me."

Soldiers from different backgrounds form Army of one

Story by Spc. Bronwyn M. Meyer
367th Mobile Public
Affairs Detachment

TIKRIT — Three soldiers serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom renewed their oath to protect and defend the United States Jan. 30. However, each has traveled a different path to get to this point.

The Army motto, "An Army of One," characterizes these soldiers, who are all assigned to the 124th Signal Battalion, but have their own reasons for deciding to remain a soldier. Maj. Gen. Raymond Odierno, commander of the 4th Infantry Division and Task Force Ironhorse administered the reenlistment oaths to the three soldiers during a ceremony at 4ID headquarters.

Two of the soldiers are naturalized citizens, and another hails from south of the United States. All have endured a year in the harsh climate of Iraq, where they, and other soldiers, have pulled together despite diverse backgrounds.

A network-switching operator originally from the Republic of Palau, Spc. Rawlin Meyer, became an American citizen about three months ago. He first joined in 1998.

Meyer took advantage of a reenlistment bonus, but he says that is not why he chose to continue to serve. "I chose to reenlist because I love this job," said Meyer. "I just want to be here. I just want to be in the Army."

Similarly as a child in Guyana, South America, Sgt. William Christopher

Marks, a 124th network systems-switching maintainer, said he dreamed of being an American Soldier. "It is known to everyone as the superpower of the world," said Marks. "It is a good organization to join."

Marks emigrated from South America to the United States in 1982, calling Brooklyn, N.Y. home. In 1999, he resigned from his job so he could pursue his dream of joining the Army.

It has been four years since Marks made that decision. With one deployment under his belt, Marks feels that there are many things he can accomplish in the Army. "I don't feel that I am done yet," he said. "Four years is not enough, so I reenlisted for another six years so I can achieve what I want to achieve."

Earning two associate degrees, Marks hopes to further his civilian education as well as become a warrant officer.

The Army has provided Staff Sgt. Andrea Daniels, a battalion motor sergeant, with opportunities as well. Daniels has served in Germany, Korea, Bosnia and Iraq. "(The military) has given me many opportunities to travel, experience different cultures, meet different people, and learn more about myself," he said.

After two deployments, Kosovo and Iraq, the 13-year veteran from Gulfport, Miss. is looking forward to continuing his service in the Army.

"I am to the point in the military where my career is on the track that I want it to be, and looking prosperous for the future," said Daniels.

1st Infantry Division's, 1st BCT hits jackpot with large cache discovery

Story and photo by

Pfc. J. H. French

82nd Airborne Division

Public Affairs Office

AR RAMDI – What started out as a visit to a local businessman's house turned into the largest weapons cache find for the 1st Infantry Division's, 1st Brigade Combat Team, since it arrived in Iraq.

Members of the 1st BCT and 1st Battalion, 124 Infantry Regiment, a National Guard Unit from Miami, conducted a search at the home of Mudhir Abed Al Kharbit in downtown Ar Ramadi.

"Kharbit is a known businessman in western Iraq with business connections throughout the world," said Maj. Marty M. Leners, 1st BCT Operations Officer. "We suspected him of being a financial provider for the insurgency. The purpose of [the operation] was to establish a dialogue with the individual and hear his side of the story."

There was reason to believe that Kharbit, who spends most of his time in Jordan and Syria, was in Ar Ramadi that night, so we went and knocked on his door, Leners continued.

"It started off as a very permissive search. We were not raiding the house. We were just there to talk," he said.

"When we got to the house and started searching, we found that Kharbit was not there. The first question you always ask



Members of 1st Battalion, 124 Infantry Regiment, a Guard Unit from Miami, dig up a cache of weapons during a search at the home of Mudhir Abed Al Kharbit in Ar Ramadi.

when you go into someone's house is, 'do you have any illegal weapons here,'" explained Leners.

The answer the people at Kharbit's house gave was 'no', but A Company, 1-124 started noticing discrepancies in their story, he continued. "We started finding limited quantities of weapons, and I became suspicious because their story was not matching what the Soldiers were finding."

As the search got larger, the Soldiers found a freshly dug mound of dirt that was suspected of having buried weapons, said Leners. "As the Soldiers dug, it became obvious that the house was not only used to store small arms weapons but also crew-served weapons, mortars and surface to air missiles."

Based upon information gathered at the house, Soldiers went to another location and found a large cache.

According to Lewis F. Gordon Jr., Battalion Operations Sergeant, 1st Engineers Battalion, 1st BCT, 34 rocket propelled grenade launchers, and about 350 RPG's were found at the two sites.

According to Leners, totals for the caches are four SA-7 surface to air missiles, six mortar tubes with 55 rounds, 15 heavy caliber anti-aircraft machine guns and three sniper rifles along with other weapons and materials.

There was also 2,500 pounds of ammunition ranging from 7.62mm all the way up to 82mm at the location, said Gordon.

"We negated an improvised explosive device manufacturer site," said Gordon. There was seven IED's ready to go and the ability to make more. There were explosives, wire and remote control devices, and from the IED's discovered previously, those are the things consistent with the manufacturing of them."

Based on the amount of weapons that were being uncovered, 14 individuals were detained, Leners said. "The purpose [of the mission] was not to detain them; we just went there to talk to Mudhir Kharbit."

Although Kharbit wasn't among the detainees, Leners was able to talk to him via satellite phone.

"He was staying in a hotel in Damascus, Syria," said Leners. "We encouraged him to come back to Ramadi and discuss the future of Ar Ramadi and the Al Anbar province, but he has yet to show up."

Even though the main suspect was not home, the mission had a very substantial outcome for operations in the area.

"We basically took their power base away by taking away all of their ammunition," explained Gordon. "It also boosts our morale. We feel great that we have reduced the ability for them to hurt us."

JAPANESE

Continued from Page 1

departed for Kuwait January 31, a small contingency of about 30 Japanese troops have been on the ground since late-January, making preparations for the country's first deployment into a combat zone since World War II.

Only after months of fierce debate did the Japanese parliament green-light the dispatch of nearly 1000 Japanese forces to southern Iraq to bolster the US-led liberation and reconstruction of the country.

By March, the Japanese Air Self Defense Force, Maritime SDF, and Ground SDF will be in Iraq, Kuwait and Qatar. About 600 alone will be from the Ground SDF.

"The Japanese coalition's role in OIF II is humanity reconstruction support and airlift for Coalition troops," said Japanese Lt. Col. Tetsuaki Hashimoto, Japanese liaison officer.

The Ground SDF will be in place in the city of Samawah by March, working to conduct medical support, water purification and supply, and reconstruction of schools and roads, explained Hashimoto.

Japanese Air SDF in Kuwait will be helping to transport relief supplies and reconstruction equipment to the Ground SDF in Samawah.

Japan is divided on the issue of its troops being deployed to such an environment, where attacks on American forces still occur, Hashimoto feels that Japanese support is vital to the restoration of Iraq.

"It is necessary to make a success of OIF by as many countries as possible," said Hashimoto. "There are tasks for the reconstruction of Iraq, so it is important for Japan to cover a part of the task."

This is the country's first deployment into a combat zone since WWII, it is also their first deployment without a United Nations mandate. Japan has only participated in UN-peacekeeping missions.

Prince Charles visits Brits



Photo by Sgt. Christopher J. Crawford, 55th Signal Co.

A special ceremony was held at the Basrah International Airport on Feb. 9. Prince Charles, The Prince of Wales presented the 2nd Para Regiment *The Sword of Peace*. The citation was also signed with the troops watching. The sword was given to them for their effort in Afghanistan.

Training scenarios keep pilots sharp

Story and photo by
Spc. Melissa Walther
367th Mobile Public Affairs
Detachment

TIKRIT — Hovering and banking, swooping and climbing, touching down for just a moment before leaping into the sky once again, the two UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters appeared to be involved in dance over the hilly terrain outside of Camp Speicher.

However strange the airborne ballet may have looked, it was meant to teach an important lesson — to give new pilots training in a real-world environment.

“Training like this is more realistic,” said 1st Lt. Miguel Gastellum, a Black Hawk pilot with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 4th Aviation Regiment. “We’re in a combat zone. It’s a good way to get your feet wet.”

A resident of Tucson, Ariz., Gastellum recently graduated from flight school in the United States before joining his unit in Iraq to receive more hands-on training.

According to Chief Warrant Officer

Matthew Harvey, a senior instructor pilot with A Company, 2nd Battalion, 4th Aviation Regiment, extra training like this is standard policy and can last anywhere from 40 to 90 days.

“We’re teaching pilots things they will need in their specific job,” said Harvey. “Things they won’t necessarily learn in flight school.”

Each unit may have different skills their pilots need depending on their job. In A Company, training includes mission planning, action-on-contact drills, extractions and navigation.

According to Harvey, these are skills that are essential for pilots and crew, in an environment that can be hostile at times.

Even though it is training, pilots can still run into real trouble at times.

“We’ve been in actual combat situations out here,” said Harvey.

The training has also lead indirectly to the discovery of valuable intelligence. It was on a training flight that a weapons cache was discovered by accident.

“We were flying low and a tarp on the ground flew up,” said Harvey. “There were about 30 (rocket propelled grenades)



Still in his instructional period, 1st Lt. Miguel Gastellum, a Blackhawk pilot with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 4th Aviation Regiment, performs a pre-flight check on his Blackhawk helicopter Feb. 1.

and mortars.”

In addition to showing new pilots the ropes, these instructional flights are also used to evaluate experienced pilots and crew on tasks such as performing their

jobs in a simulated Nuclear, Chemical and Biological environment, requiring pilots to fly wearing a protective mask.

“We want everyone to stay sharp out here,” said Harvey.

82nd Airborne Division conducts courtroom in country for first time in 60 years

Story by Sgt. Danny Martin
350th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE RIDGWAY — Unlike a dramatization on television or in the movies with officers seeking out the truth from servicemembers in a no-holds-barred fashion, the US military legal system in Iraq adheres to a rigid set of rules.

For the first time in nearly 60 years, the 82nd Airborne Division conducted a full docket of courts-martial in a field environment. Before now, Soldiers facing court-martial would typically be sent back to their home station for the proceedings. In a makeshift courtroom presided over by a military judge, Soldiers from the 82nd Airborne Division Office of the Staff Judge Advocate facilitated the proceedings here.

In the Task Force All American area of operation, the 82nd Airborne Division has 13 attorneys operating under the supervision of Lt. Col. Thomas Ayres, the Division Staff Judge Advocate. Two attorneys, including a trial counsel, support each maneuver brigade. Attorneys also staff the division main and rear headquarters, and two trial defense counsellors support the entire division. Within each battalion there are paralegals positioned to assist commanders with legal issues that do not require an attorney.

Some of the common offenses seen by the SJA during OIF are disobeying orders and disrespect, assault, negligent discharge of a weapon, alcohol and some drug-related offenses, according to Sgt. 1st Class David Inglis, the chief paralegal for the 82nd. Typically, a soldier’s command will deal with the less serious offenses, but the major offenses are recommended for court-martial.

In the event of a court-martial, soldiers have the option of being tried by a panel of service members or by the judge alone. Both scenarios have essentially the same

format, which mirrors the civilian court system.

There is the standard findings phase where the prosecution attempts to prove the soldier’s guilt and the defense counsel counters the charges, according to Capt. Jason Denney, the trial counsel for FOB Ridgway.

If a soldier is found guilty of any offense, there is then the sentencing phase. Both the prosecution and defense counsel make their arguments to the judge or panel whether the guilty should face stern or lenient punishment. Soldiers may later request clemency from the Convening Authority, who in the 82nd Airborne Division, is Maj. Gen. Charles H. Swannack, Jr.

In the All American area of operation, there have been more than 20 courts-martial this month.

The SJA office plays a much larger role to the command than simply conducting courts-martial. Aside from the crime and punishment portion of the law, they provide professional legal services throughout the range of military operations to support the command’s mission, according to Maj. Ian Corey, the Deputy Staff Judge Advocate of the 82nd Airborne Division.

“We act as the legal advisors to the command,” said Corey. “Commanders should consult their supporting judge advocate if they have a potential legal issue.”

As the legal advisors to the command, the SJA provide expertise in the areas of contract law, administrative law, operational law and claims. They also perform legal reviews of investigations into accidents and incidents concerning soldiers.

Operational law consists of the rules of engagement, guidelines concerning targeting, and detainee operations. Administrative law encompasses issues such as contract and fiscal law, investigations and interpretation of Army regulations. The claims program supports commanders by preventing distractions to the operation from claimants and promoting good will with the local popu-

lation by providing compensation for personal injury or property damage caused by Army personnel during non-combat operations.

The glitz and glamour of Hollywood may portray the service members of the legal system as only prosecutors and defenders. Yet the true definition of the SJA is to help soldiers and the command. “When we help soldiers with problems, they can focus on the mission,” according to Denney. “It lets them know the Army is taking care of them. And that results in the command being able to more effectively accomplish its mission”



Work pays off at Super Phosphate Plant

Story and photo by
Sgt. 1st Class Gary L.
Qualls, Jr.
3rd Armored Cavalry
Regiment

AL QA'IM — The economy in the Al Qa'im area got a big boost Jan. 31 when the management of the Super Phosphate Plant received a check for \$2.5 million from the Ministry of Industry and Minerals.

Plant managers say the money will enable the plant to start partial operations in one month. Civil affairs personnel in 1st Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment have been working for months to get the plant — considered to be full of economic potential — up and running. The plant would employ 5,500 workers and produce several products that are currently in demand on the world market, like zeolite and sulphuric acid.

Zeolite is a mineral used for many products, including odor and moisture control goods. Sulphuric acid is also used to



Maj. Gen. Charles H. Swannack, commanding general of 82nd Airborne Division, and Col. David A. Teeple, regimental commander of 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, stand with managers of the Super Phosphate Plant behind a super-sized check for \$2.5 million. The check, from the Ministry of Industry and Minerals, was presented to plant management at a ceremony Jan. 31.

make many products, including fertilizers, paints and detergents.

The plant will market products

in country, to neighboring countries and throughout the world, said Maj. Gen. Charles H.

Swannack, commanding general of the 82nd Airborne Division. Swannack is responsible for the

Al Anbar Province, where the plant is located. Swannack's remarks came in a speech at the ceremony where the check was presented.

Swannack recounted how, just a few short months ago, elements in the plant were allowed to rust. Trash and other debris were scattered throughout the plant and fire and other safety hazards were plentiful.

Plant employees have since taken significant steps toward resuming production and have made the plant a healthier and safer work environment. They implemented measures such as worker safety programs and developed procedures for handling and labeling hazardous materials.

"Things are very different (at the plant) than they were three months ago," Swannack said. "If this hard work and spirit of the workers continues, there will be a free flow of information between management and the workers, and they will come up with many good ideas to solve problems in the future."

608th OC collects ammo from redeploying troops

Story and Photos by
Cpl. Joe Niesen
350th Mobile Public
Affairs Detachment

Forward Operating Base Ridgeway, Iraq — When soldiers first rolled into Iraq, they carried with them all the ammunition and ordnance necessary to fulfill their mission. As units begin preparing for the long awaited trip home, the turn-in of excess ammunition is one milestone most are happy to pass.

For Soldiers in Iraq, ammunition turn-in and processing is handled by Soldiers from the 608th Ordnance Company, Fort Benning, Ga. These Soldiers track the number and types of ammunition turned in by redeploying units and ultimately schedule its return to the United States.

"It's kind of like a recycling operation," said Staff Sgt. Miguel Quinones, ammunition supply point noncommissioned officer in charge of the Ridgeway platoon. The ammunition turned in is inspected, counted and sent back to the United States where it is placed back into the system.

According to Quinones, the soldiers deal primarily with the turn in of large caliber ordnance. The soldiers still travel with ammunition; it is primarily the unit's excess or reserve ammo that is turned in.

The Soldiers of the 608th have been in Iraq since April, and like many, have

worked with several units throughout Iraq. The 3rd and 4th Infantry Divisions, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment and 1st Armor Division are just a few of the many units that the group has worked with. Aside from handling the retrograde movement of ammunition in the theater, the soldiers also work with Explosive Ordnance Disposal teams to move cap-

"I've seen so much (enemy) ammo out here, that sometimes I wonder what it would have been like if they had used it,

**Spc. Vince Dunlap
608th Ordnance Company**

tured enemy ammunition (CEA) to safe locations for disposal.

"We've worked with so many people out here, that it gets hard to remember them all," said Spc. Vince Dunlap, ammo specialist with the 608th.

The unit handles all types and caliber of ammunition for the Army and has gotten to see its share of CEA as well. They have loaded enemy mortar rounds, small arms ammunition and even a few 7,500 pound

bombs. Still, they work professionally and claim to have had no accidents—while casually knocking on a nearby board.

"I've seen so much (enemy) ammo out here, that sometimes I wonder what it would have been like if they had used it," said Dunlap.

Dunlap and others are happy, if not jealous of the units they have cleared. For them, it is a sure sign that their tour in Iraq is coming to a close.

"I'm jealous, I mean, I feel good that they get to go home, but we're not turning our ammo in," said Dunlap. "But, who knows, we could be next."

The 608th is the only company in Iraq retrograding ammunition. Their platoons are scattered throughout the country. They work constantly to ensure that Soldiers in the field are supplied with ammunition and that units leaving the theater are able to turn in their ammo.

Currently, the unit is processing munitions for the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment and its attachments as they prepare to leave over the coming months. They count, inspect and move the rounds within their ammo supply point and prepare it for transportation.

Each unit they assist is one more group that will soon be heading back to friends

and family half a world away. The Soldiers of the 608th know that their turn will come soon enough. They have a job to do, and will continue to complete the mission.

"This is our mission; it's what we get paid to do," said Dunlap.



Spc. Vince Dunlap, Ammunition Specialist with the 608th Ordnance Company, picks up rounds for transport to a holding area at Forward Operating Base Ridgeway. The ammunition, recently turned-in by the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, will be shipped back to the United States where it will be serviced and placed back into the ammunition system.

Last 101st Airborne Unit leaves Kuwait



Maj. Gen. David H. Petraeus, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) commanding general, and Command Sgt. Maj. Marvin Hill, 101st Airborne Division command sergeant major, pose for a photo at Camp Navstar, Kuwait, the final "Screaming Eagles" to cross back into Kuwait after rotating to Kuwait out of Iraq.

Story and photo by
Pfc. Thomas Day
40th Public Affairs Detachment

NAVISTAR, Kuwait — Spc. Misael Santiago of Lawton, Okla., pulling rear convoy security with a .50 caliber machine gun, had the historical honor of being the final 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) "Screaming Eagle" to leave Iraq by vehicle at the conclusion of the division's one-year tour supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The seven-vehicle convoy, with elements of Company D, 3-502nd Infantry Regiment, and Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Division Support Command, rolled across the border just before 5 a.m. Kuwaiti time this morning. "I just feel good to be almost home," Santiago said, echoing sentiments of every other troop who undertook the three-day movement from Mosul to Kuwait.

Capt. Justin Herbermann and Sgt. Morris Russell, both of HHC DISCOM, served as the truck commander and driver, respectively, of the final Humvee.

Maj. Gen. David H. Petraeus, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) commanding general, DISCOM Commander Col. Samuel Holloway and Division Command Sgt. Maj. Marvin Hill were on hand to greet and congratulate the historic convoy when it arrived.

According to soldiers in the convoy, the journey was "quiet" and they did not encounter any attacks or unusual incidents.

The end of the road is near, but the units still have a good deal of work to do before flying back to Fort Campbell, Ky.

Vehicles and equipment need to be washed, and of course, nobody will be going home without having first completed the obligatory health screenings. Still, nothing could temper the excitement as the troops left Iraq.

"It feels great," said Pfc. Marshall Webb, 3rd Battalion, 502nd Infantry. Would he ever want to go back, as a soldier or as a civilian? "Maybe in a year or two."

A small contingent of 101st soldiers, assigned to Mosul Airfield, are all that remains of the 101st in Iraq. They are projected to fly out of Iraq later this month.

Mighty Air Ambulance speeds to save lives

Story and photo by Sgt. Troy Chatwin
367th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

BAQUBAH — A call comes in on the medical evacuation frequency with a "nine-line MedEvac" request from a highway in central Iraq.

An improvised explosive device has disabled a vehicle convoy and wounded Soldiers need to be moved to a hospital.

Within 10 minutes, a helicopter carrying a combat medical team onboard is in the air and en route to the site at speeds approaching 200 miles per hour.

With roots that can be traced back to MedEvac crews that served in Vietnam, the 57th Medical Company (Air Ambulance), known as the "Original Dustoff," relies on teamwork and commitment to deliver high-speed medical evacuations in the Task Force Ironhorse area of operations.

"If we don't get there on time, people could die," said Warrant Officer Thomas Schurr, a pilot from Palmdale, Calif. "Once we receive the nine-line we only have 10 minutes to be up in the air and on the way."

"If the medic says 'this guy is critical,' we pull the guts out of the aircraft to get the patient to the hospital," said Chief Warrant Officer Kevin Herrick, a Panhandle, Texas resident, and another pilot in the air ambulance company.

Placing medics on helicopters to treat casualties during the critical hour following the injury known as the "golden hour" was the original concept of MedEvac during the Vietnam War.

"The difference between casualty evacuation and MedEvac is with CasEvac you get a ride, but no treatment," said 1st Lt. Samuel Fricks, the commander of Bravo Forward Support Team, which supports the 2nd Brigade Combat Team.

"With MedEvac a highly trained team of medical specialists provides continuous medical treatment while en route to the forward surgical team or combat support hospital."

Loss of life, limb or eyesight is the guide as to when a MedEvac flight is warranted.

That guideline applies to both Coalition forces and enemy troops.

"A hard part of my job is to keep the enemy alive," said Staff Sgt. Michael Lombardo, a medic from Columbus, Ohio.

"Under the Geneva Convention, we still treat enemy Soldiers like we hope they would treat our guys."

I look at it as keeping them alive so they can be interrogated."

The highest-priority job of the medic after picking up patients is to keep them alive, stabilize the patient, stop the bleeding, and provide continuous medical treatment, said Lombardo.

Patient care en route is one of the keys to preventing a casualty from becoming a fatality.

"The theater has seen over 2,000 wounded patients and about (500) deaths," said the Morrow, Ga., native about the number of casualties transported on MedEvac aircraft in theater.

"MedEvac has a lot to do with keeping the numbers low."

“It takes the pilots, the crew chiefs and the medics to make the team. It takes the whole team to make saving lives happen.”

— 1st Lt. Samuel Fricks
Commander Bravo Forward Support Team

The result is about 83 percent of those picked up survive. Much of that is due to the immediate treatment provided by the in-flight medics, Lombardo said.

The 57th MedEvac, part of the XVIII Airborne Corps at Fort Bragg, N.C., is easily distinguished from other MedEvac companies by the red cross on a white circle found on the nose of their aircraft. They have flown over 600 hours and carried more than 100 patients in the 4th Infantry Division's area of operations.

"The white circle behind the red cross is the signature of our unit," said Fricks, explaining the unique logo of the "Original Dustoff" unit.

"We are proud of it and it distinguishes us from everybody else."

Whether the 57th MedEvac or another unit delivers the high-speed medical care, the highly trained team of medics and flight crew are pivotal in maintaining life during the "golden hour."

"It takes the pilots, the crew chiefs and the medics to make the team," said Fricks. "It takes the whole team to make saving lives happen."

Civil Affairs organizes park renovation

Civil Affairs helps to coordinate and change park image

Story and photo by Pfc. Blanka Stratford
CFLCC Public Affairs Office

BAGHDAD — The prospect of a new and improved Iraq continues to unfold as the 422nd Civil Affairs Battalion, Task Force 1st Armored Division, officially initiated a major park-renovation project in Baghdad Jan 29.

Hameed Khalif Maree, directorate general of the Baghdad district of Karkh, slashed through past setbacks and dove into the park's future with a traditional ribbon cutting ceremony.

"It is an honor to be part of such a significant venture," said Maree.

The project, worth a total of \$165,000 in grants, funds and private donations, will include the restoration of a historic fountain with a surrounding flower garden area, the construction of a 500-seat soccer stadium for

intramural teams, the filling of pond that has been neglected for years and the development of a playground area with accompanying walkways.

According to Capt. Richard Cote, 422nd CA team leader, the civil affairs team wanted to erase the negative memories associated with the area, a former mass gravesite of Fedayeen soldiers buried during the initial stages of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The 422nd cleared the area and turned the bodies over to the International Red Cross/Crescent for identification and family notification.

"We are trying to get [the park] back to the original way it was, 10 to 15 years ago," said Cote.

The project will take two to three months to complete,



Spc. Matthew Forester, 422nd Civil Affairs Battalion project coordinator, holds the ribbon marking the launch of a park renovation project while Hameed Khalif Maree, Directorate General of the Baghdad District of Karkh, prepares to make the symbolic cut.

starting with the clearing of war debris that has accumulated around the area, he said.

The stadium will include additions such as concrete benches, and restrooms and showers for the teams.

Approximately 50 to 60 Iraqis will be taking part in the expansion.

"This is strictly an Iraqi project," said Cote. "422nd is just coordinating it and giving the Iraqis the appropriate funding to help them do it.

Our goal is to put local Iraqis back to work."

So far, the 422nd has completed a variety of missions in the Baghdad area, some include rehabilitating schools, creating playgrounds and soccer fields, and instilling an Iraqi security force at the Al Ali Bus Terminal, as well as

amassing \$191,000 in preliminary funding for the terminal's repair.

"In addition, we got the property and are getting ready to construct the first National Fire Academy for Iraq, starting on the first of March," said Cote, who is also a firefighter for the Myrtle Beach, N.C., Fire Department.

"Civil Affairs is a job where one gets to see the end results, and it's nice to see the developments come through," he said.

"This project will give the community a sense of ownership because they're working on it. It will boost their morale.

What we've done is help build a better relationship between coalition forces and the local Iraqi people."

Need cash?

The 230th Finance Battalion is on Steadfast and Loyal Street next to the bombed-out palace in Tikrit.

Hours of operation:
Mondays — Saturdays
9 a.m. — 5 p.m.
Sundays
10 a.m. — 2 p.m.

Check cashing limit is \$200 per week and the casual pay limit is \$350 per month.

A DA Form 2142 (pay inquiry) signed by an E-7 or above is needed for casual pay.

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A Paratrooper from the 1st Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, reacts to incoming fire from anti-Coalition personnel on Feb. 12 at the Fallujah Mayor's Office.

TROOPERS, Continued from Page 2

runaway vehicle onto highway 10 directly into range of an M1 Abrams tank manned by 1st Infantry Division Soldiers. The two assailants were killed on impact.

No American casualties resulted from the fire-fight.

The troops returned to base camp. Abizaid and Swannack were there to express their gratitude.

"Thanks for serving your country," Abizaid said. "Thank you for being paratroopers."

Abizaid took the opportunity to make the troops aware of how vital the 82nd's combat ready and experienced paratroopers are to the war on terrorism.

"We've got a long road ahead of us," he said. "We're going to need guys like you, who serve in the 82nd Airborne Division. You have become one of the best trained fighting forces the Army has to offer."



A paratrooper manning a .50 caliber machine gun points to the roof of a building where anti-Coalition Forces are firing from. Another paratrooper from 1st Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, radios this information to his troops in the area. The attack was initiated by anti-Coalition forces Feb. 12 at the Fallujah Mayor's Office.

Cavalry kick up dust throughout Iraq

Story and photo by Sgt. Danny Martin
350th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE RIDGWAY — A dismounted patrol scans the barren desert for craters from a mortar attack as a convoy of supplies leaves the base. At the same time, three heavily armed vehicles cruise Route 10 in search of improvised explosive devices and provide reconnaissance for the route, zone and area.

Each of these missions has one thing in common with the others - Cavalry Scouts are involved in each.

For three scouts in Alpha Troop, 1st Squadron, 17th Cavalry Regiment, the days are long, tiresome and filled with the same people as the day before. They are regularly stuck riding in the same vehicle with each other, sometimes up to 20 hours at a time.

They have learned each other's quirks, pet peeves, annoyances, attitudes and personalities, as well as how to look after one another. Staff Sgt. Michael Labadie is in charge with Sgt. Jonathan Patton manning the main gun atop the vehicle and Spc. Jason Swiger, the driver.

With so many soldiers supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom who are performing missions outside of their military occupational specialty, the scouts are doing their job just as it was described to them during their one-station unit training at Fort Knox, Ky. As part of the only



While Sgt. Jonathan Patton scans the horizon with binoculars, Staff Sgt. Michael Labadie answers a call on his radio during a mission.

airborne-based ground cavalry regiment in the Army, the scouts here have one of the most important missions of any group of soldiers.

The standard mission for a cavalry scout here is one of many tasks: They are responsible for route, zone and area reconnaissance, convoy and route security, route clearance, operating traffic control points and observation posts, and recovering downed aircraft.

"We've been on every DAR (downed aircraft recovery) mission since the division returned in September," said Labadie.

In December, Labadie and his crew of scouts drove

over 9,000 miles providing security for convoys from FOB Ridgway to Baghdad International Airport, FOB Junction City, FOB St. Michael, FOB St. Mere and Champion Base.

On a recent mission, the group was providing security for a team investigating a report of an indirect fire attack. While searching for mortar or rocket craters, the group discovered a four-foot-long rocket lodged in the sand that had not detonated. The team called an explosive ordnance disposal team and provided additional security until the weapon was destroyed. Before the EOD team arrived, the scouts conducted a reconnaissance of a possible point of origin and the scouts questioned two shepherds.

Labadie, Patton and Swiger deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom originally in February 2003 and were here through May. They then returned to the Al Anbar province in September.

"When we were first out here, we found a huge cache about 200 meters from where we were sleeping," Swiger said. "We didn't see it at first, but if you walked like 10 feet over, you could see mounds of mortar rounds in a building."

The mission for Labadie, Patton and Swiger will continue until the day they fly back to Fort Bragg, N.C. They will still be in the same vehicle with each other for hours on end, driving each other crazy, watching each other's back and completing each mission handed to them.